Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A "MENSA PONDERARIA" FROM ASSOS.

Among the objects from Assos acquired by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is a block of white marble containing five bowl-shaped cavities. Similar monuments have been found at several places in the ancient Greek and Roman world, the one most generally known being that from Pompeii, now in the Museum of Naples.[1] Neither the Greek nor the Latin name of these objects is known; the names *σήκωμα* and *mensa ponderaria*, now often applied, are both of them unsupported by ancient usage. But their purpose is clear. They contained standard measures of capacity, by comparison with which the measures used by dealers could be gauged. They were therefore set up in some public place, often in an agora or forum. Mr. J. T. Clarke, who was in charge of the American investigations at Assos, and who has given his cordial consent to the present publication, has kindly written me in regard to the Assian *mensa* as follows: "The block in question was found in a large chûte of *dêbris* beneath, *i. e.*, to the south of, the main retaining-wall of the agora at Assos. From this position it may naturally be concluded that the table was once erected as a public standard upon this market-place."

One corner of the block was broken off, presumably before its discovery,[2] but has been cemented on in the Museum. The dimensions are as follows: length 1.11 metres, breadth 0.455 m., height at the ends 0.21 m. Except for 0.14 m. at one end and 0.155 m. at the other, the long sides of the block are roughly bevelled off toward the middle, leaving the height of the long sides 0.15 m. The unbevelled ends rested upon upright supports, to which they were secured with the help of two dowel-holes, which may be seen on the bottom of the block, at diagonally opposite corners. When thus set up the table was exposed on all four sides. The upper surface has a raised margin about one centimetre in height, and each bowl has a raised rim. A roughly-cut groove runs from the rim of *D* to the corner of the block (*Figure 7*).

---

[1] Descriptions and illustrations of several of these monuments have been published. The following list is as complete as I can make it: one from Athens, 'Εφημερὶς 'Αρχαιολογική, 1862, p. 23, πίναξ θ (KOUMANOUDES); one from Ushak in Phrygia, *Mémoires Couronnés de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, vol. XXVII (WAGENER); one from Gytheion in Laconia, *Philologus*, XXIX, pp. 700 ff. (CARL CURTIUS), and Lebas, *Voyage archéologique*, Inscriptions II, note on 241 b (FOUCART); one from Pompeii, often published, best in the *Giornale degli Scavi*, N. S. II, pp. 144 ff. Tav. VI (MANCINI); one from Minturnae, *ibid.*, and also *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de France*, vol. 25 (=EGGER, *Mémoires d'histoire ancienne*, pp. 197 ff.); an object probably of this class found at Anthedon in Boiotia and published in this JOURNAL, vol. VI (1890), p. 100. Other examples, of which brief descriptions without illustrations exist, are: one, unfinished, from Athens, KEKULÉ, *Bildwerke des Theseions*, No. 364; one from Ganos and two from Panidon in European Turkey, *Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires*, 2^me^ Série 6 (1871), pp. 466 ff. (DUMONT); one from Naxos, referred to by Dumont in Lebas, *loc. cit.*; one from Tivoli, *Athenæum*, 1883, p. 513 (LANCIANI).

[2] This conjecture is confirmed by Mr. F. H. Bacon, of the Expedition.

Considering the purpose served by the five bowls, one might expect them to be finished with extreme nicety. On the contrary, their concave surfaces are rough, their rims are not level, and there are no discoverable marks to indicate the heights to which they were to be filled. Mr. Edward Robinson, the Curator of Classical Antiquities in the Museum, was the first to note these facts and to suggest their almost certain explanation. These cavities, namely, were originally lined with metal, doubtless bronze. No traces remain of the metal or of any means of riveting it to the marble, but it must have continued down through the escape-holes and have been bent back against the surfaces of the circular sinkings around these holes (see *Figure 7*). There were, of course, removable stoppers and some means of indicating how high the vessels were to be filled. The existence of similar metal linings in the cavities of the Pompeian *mensa* has been made probable by Mancini, and is assumed as a matter of course by Lanciani for the one from Tivoli. Probably some, if not all, of the previously known Greek tables were similarly fitted up. The one from Athens, for example, has the surfaces of its bowls rough, while in some other cases there are no outlets, a state of things which points to the use of removable vessels, as Mancini suggests for the *mensa* from Minturnae.

As is the case with the tables from Ushak, Gytheion and Ganos, and with that from Pompeii in its original form, the cavities of our table are accompanied by inscriptions naming the measures. All but one of these are engraved to be read from one side, which may therefore be called the front; the one exception is to be read from the opposite side. The first, in front of *A* (see *Fig.*), nearly effaced, but still legible, is KOT, *i. e.*, *κοτ(ύλη)*. In front of *B* the surface is chipped away. The inscription here may have been TPI, *i. e.*, *τρι(κότυλον)*, as on the Ganos table. In front of *C* we have ▨[I. Although no cross-bar at the top of the last letter can be made out, this must be read [ΞΕ]C̣[Τ], *i. e.*, *ξέστ(ης)*. In front of *D* we have ΧΟΙ, *i. e.*, *χοῖ(νιξ)*; and, behind *E*, ΤΡΙ, *i. e.*, *τρι(χοίνικον)*. These inscriptions may, I should judge, have been cut by the same hand. The form C, which is the most distinctive thing about them, points to a date not earlier than the time of Augustus. There are other letters, and these more deeply cut, viz., CΔΦΑ (I do not know in what order they should be read) on the rim of *E*, and ΤΡΙΑ in front of it. The letters ΤΡΙ of ΤΡΙΑ differ from all others on the stone in having stongly marked apices, and they are besides more deeply cut than the adjacent Α. ΤΡΙΑ is probably *τρία*, but, why the form is neuter, I do not know; and the letters on the rim are totally enigmatical to me. Finally, there remain to be mentioned five straight marks, irregularly placed, to the left of and a little below the letters ΧΟΙ. If these are significant marks at all, which I strongly doubt, perhaps they should be read 𐅃ΙΙΙ, *i. e.*, 8. But one does not expect to find this system of numerical notation in an inscription of the imperial period. The most careful search has failed to reveal any other traces of letters anywhere on the block.

The *kotyle* and the *xestes* (*i. e.*, *sextarius*) were used for both dry and liquid measure; the *choenix*, under that name, only for dry measure. The 3-*choenix* measure is exactly equal to the *χοῦς*, a common unit of liquid measure, and it is noteworthy that it is not called by that name. *D* and *E*, therefore, if not the other bowls as well, were designed to be standards of dry measure. Now the outlets are too small to allow the easy escape of flour or grain, the largest, that of *D*, being only about 0.028 m. in diameter, and that without the metal lining. Moreover, the groove cut on the surface of the block was obviously to drain off spilled liquid. It would appear, therefore, that the method of testing, say, a choenix-measure to be used in buying and selling, was to fill it with water and then to pour the water into the standard choenix-measure of the table.

The capacities in litres of the five cavities, filled to the brim, are approximately as follows: *A*, 0.49; *B*, 1; *C*, 0.795; *D*, 1.49; *E*, 4.62. It seems altogether probable that the intended measures, *i. e.*, the measures as determined on the bronze linings, conformed to the prevalent Attic and Roman standard, and were therefore as follows: *A*, 0.2736; *B*, 0.821; *C*, 0.547; *D*, 1.094; *E*, 3.283: for both the name and the actual capacity of *C* suggest that it was intended to hold twice as much as *A*. In that case, *B* must have been intended to hold two and a half or three times as much as *A*. The former is an unlikely measure, the latter, the *trikotylon*, a likely one. On this supposition, the *kotyle* of our table could not have varied much from the Attic standard. It could not, for example, have been equal to the Aeginetan (0.397 l.) or to the Pontic (0.365 l.) *kotyle*. And a consideration of the diameters of the bowls will show that, on the assumption of the Attic standard, the several measures, as determined on the bronze linings, would have come about equally near to the surface of the table.

F. B. TARBELL.

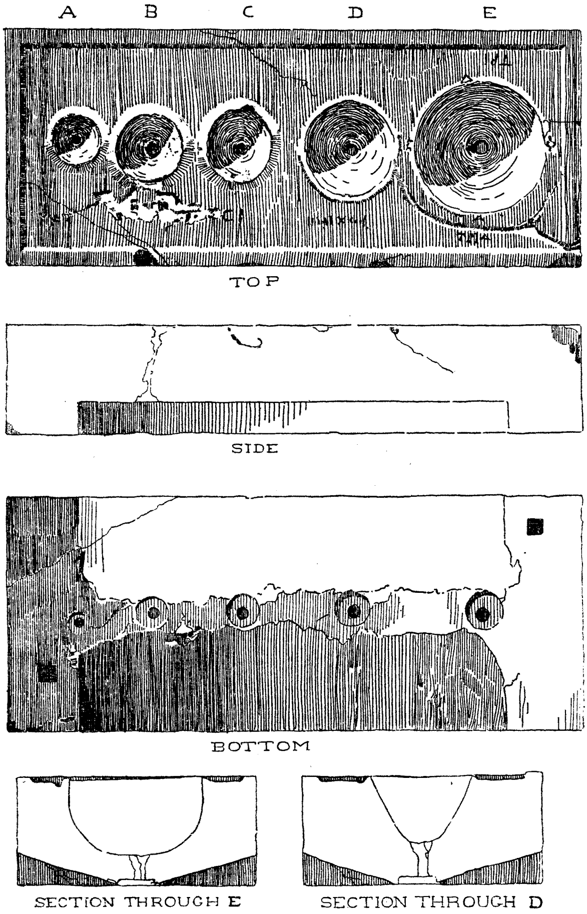

FIG. 7.—*Mensa Ponderaria from Assos.*